

Country Journal

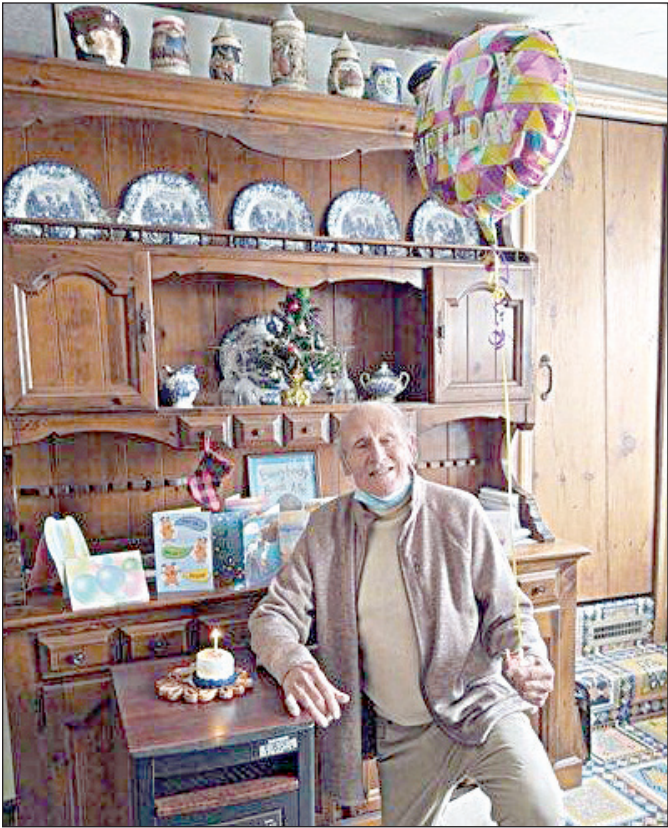
Devoted to the Needs of the Hilltowns

Becket, Blandford, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Huntington, Middlefield, Montgomery, Otis, Plainfield, Russell, Sandisfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg, Worthington

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Blandford Birthdays!



Bob Wright turned 90 on Friday, April 16. Members of the Blandford Council on Aging brought birthday cake, dinner, and a balloon to celebrate. Right, Rita Templeman celebrates her 100th birthday with long-time friend David St. Laurent. Members of the Blandford Council on Aging brought birthday Templeman greetings, a cake and flowers. COA Director Margit Mikuski and Chair Judith MacKinnon managed the festivities.

Photos Courtesy of the Blandford Council on Aging

WILLIAMSBURG

PSC proposal passes 358 to 187

By Peter Spotts

Town voters have made the future official as a new public safety complex will be constructed on the Helen E. James lot after voting in favor 358 to 187 on Monday, April 19.

The ballot vote was the second vote needed to approve the project after voters at a special town meeting on April 3 passed 259 to 48. Over the past decade, multiple committees have worked on the public safety complex to help bring the current proposal onto the doorsteps of moving from concept to reality.

VOTE, page 7

CHESTER

Laboratory moves forward with HCA

By Peter Spotts

Canna Testing LLC is working toward opening the first marijuana testing laboratory in the western part of the state, and signed a Host Community Agreement with the Selectboard on April 5.

Director of Operations Nach Davé said there's much more work to do as they need to get approval from the Cannabis Control Commission while assembling the equipment the lab will need when it's built in Charlie's

LABORATORY, page 6

WORTHINGTON

Budget proposes police increase

By Peter Spotts

Residents will gather at 9:30 a.m. on Saturday, May 1 for Annual Town Meeting, which includes a couple large increases to the Police Department budget.

The budget proposal includes doubling Police Chief Robert Reinke's salary from \$36,400 to \$72,800 and the addition of a new additional police department wages line for \$32,112 for a full-time officer.

BUDGET, page 10

GATEWAY

School level funds town assessments

By Shelby Macri and Peter Spotts

After the Gateway Regional School Committee passed the alternative assessment for district towns last month, the district committed additional funds to level fund all town assessments from fiscal 2021 to fiscal 2022.

Business and Finance Officer Stephanie Fisk said the district used about \$500,000 from the Excess and Deficiency Fund to help reduce the costs towns have to pay this year and make assessments under the alternative method a 0% increase.

"We were able to reduce the assessments for next year by increasing the use of revenue sources," Fisk said. "The total expenditure budget has not been

reduced; however, how we will fund the budget with revenue sources will be increased."

Fisk added they're planning to replenish the account before June 30 so next year's district budget to not be affected.

Originally, the alternative assessment proposed leveling the percentage of town increases to 1.78%, rather than the varying decreases and increases in different towns through the statutory assessment. Now the alternative assessment proposes that each town pay the exact same amount as the previous year, with the extra money being used from Excess and Deficiency.

For example, Blandford would've had an assessment increase of \$29,251 under

FUNDS, page 9

BECKET

Local resident finds peace among plants

By Shelby Macri

Sue Conner Szenda is creating new ways to remember and memorialize those who have been lost in two-and-a-half acres of old farmland turned into memorial gardens.

Szenda calls them serenity gardens as making the space and creating her own garden has brought her serenity.

"It used to be my uncle's farmland that had caught fire a number of years ago. I went in a year ago with some hand clippers, and made a space for a garden for my friend Gabby," Szenda said. "During covid, we couldn't have a celebration of her life or a funeral with more than 10 people; I made a garden for her."

The memorial gardens picked up speed during last

year's quarantine, as more people visited to create their gardens. Though created during COVID-19, the gardens aren't memorializing those who passed from the virus. Though unfortunate, the gardens are dedicated to those who passed for other reasons like age, diabetes, and other ailments. Due to the safety precautions and limits to gatherings, people weren't able to mourn or remember as they usually do, creating the appeal for the serenity gardens.

"It just happened, it turned into something all on its own. It means a lot for people to gather and officially celebrate life," Szenda said. "It's nice to see people wanting to be a part of it, it's a nice place to be and relax. It's not a huge park or any-

PLANTS, page 14



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HILLTOWNS

VOICES OF SUPPORT



Worthington’s Diane Meehan and Sen. John Velis, D-Westfield, share their messages for survivors of domestic violence as part of the Southern Hilltowns Domestic Violence Task Force’s Hilltown Voice’s campaign to raise awareness to prevent and end domestic violence.

Submitted photos

Turkey season happening now

The 2021 spring turkey hunting season in Massachusetts is April 26 to May 22.

Hunters are encouraged to buy hunting licenses and permits online. MassWildlife offices are currently closed, but hunters can purchase licenses and permits online through MassFishHunt or through any license vendor. Minors under 18-years-old can also purchase licenses online, click here for details.

Regulation requires that all hunters place an official green safety sticker on their firearm positioned so it’s visible when sighting down the barrel.

MassWildlife urges all hunters to use MassFishHunt to report harvested birds online. If they need to report their harvest in person, view a map of check stations open this spring.

MassWildlife offers the following tips.

Follow state guidance related to COVID-19, social distancing, and travel.

Always follow the 10 basic rules of firearm safety.

Be completely sure of your target and what is beyond it before you shoot. Always practice firearm safety.

Don’t stalk turkey sounds; it could be another hunter. Sit or stand and call the birds to you.

Do not wear red, white, blue, or black; these colors are associated with male turkeys.

Protect your back. Set up against a large tree or rock and make sure your view isn’t obstructed. Don’t hide in a place with an obstructed view.

Do not place decoys too close to where you set up. Never carry an exposed decoy or tail fan while hunting; put them in a bag when carrying them in or out of hunting locations.

Consider wearing hunter orange when entering or leaving your hunting area.

COA opens farm share applications

HUNTINGTON — The Council on Aging is once again offering farm shares through Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture. The cost is just \$10 and covers all 10 weeks of the program.

Participants must be Huntington residents and 60 years old or older to qualify. In addition, they must be able to answer yes to at least one of the fol-

FARM SHARE, page 3

Valley Press Club extends scholarships for journalism students to Friday, May 7

The Valley Press Club, based in Springfield, has extended the deadline to May 7 to apply for up to six \$1,000 scholarships to high school seniors in Western Massachusetts and Northern Connecticut who are interested in pursuing a career in journalism, and has extended.

The Valley Press Club Scholarships, funded by contributions and dues to the Press Club, are for students planning careers in print, online or broadcast journalism.

The Republican Scholarship, funded by The Republican, is for students living within the newspaper’s circulation area who are planning careers in print journalism.

The 22News Scholarship, funded by WWLP-22News, is for students planning careers in broadcast journalism.

The Edward J. Malley Jr. Memorial Scholarship, established in memory of a chief photographer for the Springfield Newspapers, is for students planning careers in photojournalism.

The Rhonda Swan Memorial Scholarship, established in memory of the award-winning journalist, editor and author, is for students who are under-represented, in the Springfield area, and planning careers in journalism.

The Al Jaffe Scholarship, funded by Al Jaffe, the Valley Press Club’s first scholarship recipient in 1964, who retired in 2015 as vice president of talent negotiation and production recruitment at ESPN, is for students planning careers in broadcast journalism or sports journalism.

Primary emphasis is placed on career goals, writing ability, scholastic aptitude and overall achievement as measured by an applicant’s high school transcript, class rank, academic awards, SAT scores and extracurricular activities.

Scholarship applications are available at www.ValleyPressClub.com, high school guidance offices, or by emailing NTassinari@TheBigE.com. Applications may be sent by mail to Noreen Tassinari, VPC Scholarship Chair, Eastern States Exposition, 1305 Memorial Ave., West Springfield, MA 01089 or electronically to NTassinari@TheBigE.com.

The deadline for submissions is May 7. Over the course of five decades, The Valley Press Club has presented over \$130,000 in scholarships to eligible students.

The Valley Press Club consists of active and retired journalists and public relations professionals from corporate and nonprofit organizations.

TRAIL WORK



Kim Kelliher of the Hilltown Hikers examines part of Unkamit’s Path Section #7, the old Indian footpath from Westfield to Lee, during a gps and clean up hike. Please see more photos on page 16.

Submitted photo

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HUNTINGTON

Board asks representatives to look at vocational school costs

By Peter Spotts

HUNTINGTON — Rising school budget costs and police reform were the major concerns the Selectboard brought to Rep. Natalie Blais, D-Sunderland, on Wednesday, April 14.

Chairman Ed Renauld told Blais the town had to spend \$140,000 out of its stabilization account last year to cover the increase for the Gateway Regional School District assessment.

“As you know, you take money from sources like that to pay for something that goes up every year, you’re already up to your levy limit, there’s just no way to keep that up,” Renauld said. “The local school aid is really important. I know the school is doing a really good job with its budgeting, but [as a] town we just don’t have the revenue, the tax base to keep up.”

Selectman Roger Booth added his concern with vocational school funding due to how expensive it is to send each student there. The issue has been compounded this year as deadlines for choosing a vocational school were extended, so towns are being charged for a student in Gateway for the March 1 census, then having the student choose to go to a vocational school, charging the town with those costs as well.

“We’re going to have to pay twice for them this year...We’re being charged for them living in Huntington for Gateway and we’re going to be charged for tuition and busing,” Renauld said. “You’re talking an extra over \$100,000 in our budget for Voc.”

Blais told the board the vocational school issues will likely require a long-term conversation to fix. With the passage of the Student Opportunity Act, she said a commission was formed to investigate low and declining student enrollment in districts and the vocational issue is something that can be added to the commission’s list of concerns to look at.

“I’m really thrilled to say Sen. Hinds will be leading that on the senate side. I will be leading it on the house side,” she said. “That is certainly something we can begin to explore as part of that commission.”

The other school concern is if the proposed early retirement package for teachers passes as Gateway would have quite a few teachers eligible for it and Renauld noted, with Worthington leaving the district, Huntington will bear a large portion of the retirement costs of the remaining six district towns, if it goes through.

“We have not yet had committee meetings to even begin talking about pros and cons of the legislation,” Blais said. “When that legislation comes up, if there are concerns you have, I’d encourage you to be in touch with Sen. Hinds and myself to detail those concerns.”

Renauld also brought up police reform as yet another unfunded mandate from the state, adding additional financial burdens to an already stretched budget.

“This seems like another unfunded mandate by the state. It’s going to be regular, recurrent training and no money to do it,” Renauld said. “I think that legislators, you guys need to be mindful when

you pass this stuff, somebody’s got to pay for this stuff.”

Police Chief Robert Garriepy also joined the meeting to voice his concerns with the bill. He told Blais he expects to lose three of his five officers within the first year of its implementation and, like other hilltown chiefs, is concerned about how departments will be able to fill their part-time roster when all officers will have training and opportunity to pursue full-time positions. He noted how the concerns of part-time departments weren’t acknowledged until the colleges started making noise.

“This didn’t become an issue with reserve officers until the colleges found out and the colleges spoke out,” he said. “800 part-time officers in Boston were getting eliminated. That’s when people woke up. They didn’t care about the Berkshires. They didn’t care about the North Shore, South Shore.”

Garriepy also told Blais he does not feel the new training proposed in the bill is adequate to meet the training standards he was trained to and doesn’t feel having 80 hours of training be online will provide much benefit.

“My bigger concern is the quality of training that this bridge academy is going to give us I think is very insufficient to the standard of which I was trained. I do not think this bridge academy is equivalent to the training that I went through,” Garriepy said. “I don’t think there’s a benefit to being online.”

Lastly, Garriepy criticized the current discussions of putting the Western Mass. regional training facility in

Wilbraham.

“We keep hearing Wilbraham. That is foolish. If you’re in Williamstown and you’ve got to go from Williamstown to Wilbraham, it’s an hour and 45 [minutes],” he said. “Whoever thought of that needs to be drug tested.”

“I would agree with you that that is foolish,” Blais is said.

Blais and Hinds have been working with Western Mass. delegation to discuss the rural communities’ concerns with Public Safety and Security Secretary Thomas Turco and the Municipal Police Training Committee to get them addressed before its implemented on July 1.

“Believe me when I say the Western Mass. delegation is really working hard to bring these concerns to not only the secretary, but also Chief Ferullo of the MPTC,” she said.

“Sen. Hinds has been prioritizing this to make it workable for small towns because we have heard how challenging it will be for small towns financially,” added Jon Gould, who represented Hinds during the meeting.

“Chief Ferullo has done an unbelievable job spearheading this,” Garriepy said. “Those two gentlemen are doing an outstanding job. They’re taking no BS from anybody.”

The board also briefly mentioned concerns with Route 66. Renauld noted it’s deteriorating rapidly, and the town doesn’t have the money to fix it. Blais said she is working with Hinds to try and get MassWorks to come look at the state of the road.

COA announces upcoming activities

HUNTINGTON — The Council on Aging is offering activities for seniors to do at home. Puzzles, craft bags, and exercise kits will be available for pick up on the third Friday of each month at Stanton Hall, 26 Russell Road in Huntington, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. during Brown Bag distribution.

Puzzles are isolated for two weeks before redistribution. Craft bags will vary each month. The exercise kit features an exercise DVD, hand weights, and exercise bands. Please call 413-512-5205 to reserve items for pick up.

Massachusetts Councils on Aging encourages all Councils on Aging to promote walking for seniors. Physical activity improves the overall health and well-being of older adults. Even modest levels of activity done daily for 30 min-

utes can prevent or control heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, colon cancer, and weight gain. Walking boosts energy levels, improves blood circulation, lowers blood pressure, combats depression, and reduces stress.

The Council on Aging is sponsoring a “Walking Challenge” and all participants will receive a walking journal, information on walking groups, and the Town walking map. The challenge is to determine a weekly personal walking goal and track the progress on the walking log. At the end of 26 weeks, participants are requested to return the log to the Council on Aging in to qualify for a chance to win a \$50 gift certificate for a new pair of shoes. The gift certificate drawing will be held in October. Please call 413-512-5205 to sign up.

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The First Congregational Church of Huntington reminds everyone even though our physical doors are closed until further notice, we are most definitely open for worship, praise, ministry, and fellowship. We are an Open and Affirming Church inviting, welcoming, and affirming everyone — seekers, believers, and wonderers alike — on their journey of faith, to join in 10 a.m. Zoom Sunday worship.

This Sunday is Good Shepherd Sunday. Our readings from 1 John 3:16-19, 23-24 and John 10:11-18 invite us to wonder about shepherds and sheep, gates and doors, an ethic of love and how it plays out in our life and the life of our faith community.

The pastor is always available to speak with you. If you do not receive our emails and would like to connect with our Zoom worship service and/or fellowship time, please contact Pastor Carol at firstchurchofhuntington@gmail.com to receive the information you will need to participate or send us a message on Facebook.

Please use the phone numbers and email address provided to stay in touch or to contact the pastor. You are also invited to find us on Facebook at “Norwich Hill” for updates, information, and spiritual encouragement. For more information, please contact 413-667-3935 or 860-798-7771 or firstchurchofhuntington@gmail.com.

FARM SHARE

lowing four criteria: they receive SNAP benefits (food stamps), Medicaid, SSI, AFDC, welfare, or veteran’s aid; they participate in the Food Bank’s Brown Bag Program; they live alone; and their income is below \$25,760 or the total income of their household is below

\$34,840 (only one share per household). The application deadline is June 1. There are 18 shares available. If more than 18 applications are received, then there will be a random drawing to select the participants. If interested, please call Kathleen Peterson at 413-512-5205.

from page 2

Seats still vacant for Saturday, May 15 town election ballot

HUNTINGTON — Selectman Ed Renauld will be defending his seat on the board against challenger Peter Campbell, who is running a contesting write-in campaign for the May 15 election. The Selectboard term is for three years.

Melissa Reid is running to retain her seat on the Board of Health for three years unopposed. There is also a one-year Board of Health term which is vacant.

Other incumbents running unopposed include Town Clerk Linda Hamlin for a three-year term, Gateway Regional School Committee Member David Lubbers for three years unopposed, Water and Sewer Commission member H. Daniel Oliveira for three years unopposed, Tree Warden Walter Wittshirk for one

year unopposed, Moderator George Peterson III for one year unopposed, Constable Charles Dazelle for three years unopposed, Alphonso P. Pettis Fund Trustee Karen Wittshirk for three years unopposed, and Huntington Library Trustee Karen Wittshirk for three years unopposed.

Incumbents who are running for re-election via write-in campaigns include Board of Assessors member Sue Fopiano and Whiting Street Fund Trustee Karon Hathaway for three years. Both are unopposed.

Vacant positions on the ballot include one-year terms for the Water and Sewer Commission and the Gateway Regional School Committee. The town asks interested residents to please consider running for one of the vacant positions.

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OPINION

EDITORIAL

Earth Day and Arbor Day: Get inspired for the environment’s sake

Last week’s annoying snowstorm notwithstanding, spring is rounding the home stretch to full bloom and many of us look forward to spending more time outdoors. And right on cue, Earth Day is April 22 and Arbor Day is April 30.

It’s as good a time as any to pause and reflect on the environment and what each of us can do to be good stewards of our Mother Earth. Even better than thinking about it is doing something to make a difference. There are so many things each of us can do that helps. Just turning off the lights in unoccupied rooms, switching to LED bulbs and fixing dripping faucets are simple, positive actions we can all do in the name of sustainable living. For those who don’t mind getting down and dirty, planting a tree is a gift to the environment that keeps on going (get more information about appropriate trees for our area at arborday.org).

A river clean-up event planned for last Saturday was postponed because of the nor’easter and has been rescheduled for May 8. Circle the date and simply show up at 9 a.m. at Laviolette Field in Three Rivers (for more information, contact Sarah Fortune at 413-626-7084 or sfortune@townofpalmer.com).

Homeowners can take advantage of an offer by the The Great American Rain Barrel Company to purchase a rain barrel at a whole price of \$79. This is unquestionably one of the best things you can do for the environment because rain barrels not only conserve water, but also prevent contaminated runoff from reaching our rivers and streams. To order, go to greatamericanrainbarrel.com/community/ and select “Springfield” under community programs.

Want more earth-friendly tips? Consider:

- Checking thrift shops for things you need before purchasing new.
- When you do buy things, scrutinize packaging and try to avoid what can’t be recycled or isn’t biodegradable.
- Plant a garden to attract butterflies and bees.
- Compost your food scraps rather than throw them in the trash
- Take reusable bags to the supermarket
- Consider walking or bike riding rather than taking the car, when possible.
- Clean up after your dog during walks or even in your own yard (again, the runoff issue).

That’s just a small, random sample of the many things all of us can do to help protect the environment many of us cherish and all of us depend on. Showing care and concern for the environment shouldn’t be confined to Earth Day and Arbor Day. But if you’re someone who hasn’t given much thought to the environment and what you can do to make a difference, there are no better days to start.



Corrections policy

If you notice a factual error in our pages, please let us know, so that we can set the record straight. Email information to countryjournal@turley.com, or call us at 413-283-8393.

Corrections will be printed in the same section where the error originally occurred.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Support Greg Harrison for Board of Health

I am voting for Greg Harrison for Board of Health in the Town of Chester because he is one of the hardest working guys I know, and Greg has volunteered his stipend to be put back in the towns coffers this past year. What makes him special is his giant love of the Town of Chester and its people. He puts our needs first in his life, second only to his wife Cindy of course.

Greg has served one term on the Board of Health and has moved mountains in improving our transfer station including approval for its DEP permitting status,

increased efficiency in the traffic flow, lowered trash fees by always making sure we have clean loads to the MRF, kept taxpayer expenses at a minimum by volunteering his own time and materials in making signs, performing grounds maintenance, improving safety for staff and residents and security. Greg works full time as a bus driver and he is also a member of the Chester Foundation; please give him your vote for Board of Health on May 1.

Elizabeth Massa
Chester

Bylaws need to change for better housing

We have been residents of Worthington for over 40 years. We are now senior citizens choosing to stay in town. As taxpayers, we contribute to our local school, the soon to be Council on Aging facility, etc.

Much attention needs to be addressed to the housing situation that many residents are facing, including us. Some zoning laws need to be updated. Our town needs young families to settle, and we need to make it welcoming for them to do so. We have many situations in town where families have accommodated their adult children or friends by providing housing for them. This should not be thought of as a negative or as a punishment.

Some in town are negative and, because of this attitude, will not allow the town to grow. The subject of multifamily residences on one property, whether living within the main residence or detached from the main

residence, is the issue. Currently under our bylaws, it restricts the number to five related or not.

In today’s times, many families are joining households with multi residences. Let’s change the zoning to accommodate them and future families. We are not talking about developments with 10 or more houses on one property. We are talking one plot of land with the capability to care for a family or friend within the same household or turning a detached building into another residence.

There was a time that is exactly what happened; multiple generations under one roof or on the same property. Times have come full circle. Let’s help this trend, not hinder it. Young and old, we need, we want both.

James and Linda Lagoy
Worthington

Vote Greg Harrison for Board of Health

I would like to endorse Greg Harrison for Town of Chester Board of Health. He is a great help to the Board. He puts in a lot of hours a week to the transfer station, well above and beyond what is expected of him in order to keep it operating properly. Greg works well with the other members of the

Board of Health and after his first full year, can accomplish any task put in front of him. Please vote for Greg Harrison, Board of Health on May 1.

Nicholas Chiusano
Chester

Ricci the right choice for school committee

I am writing this letter in support of the candidacy of Peter Ricci who is running for a seat on Worthington’s R. H. Conwell Elementary School Committee. Peter has been a full-time resident of Worthington for the past thirteen years. He and his wife, Jaime, have three boys enrolled at R.H. Conwell in grades K, three and six. In addition, Peter has been an active volunteer at the school, giving him a unique perspective on the education of the town’s children as well as pragmatic insight into our school’s needs.

I believe that Peter has a willingness

to examine all sides of the issues and listen closely to resident’s questions and concerns. If elected to the Committee, he will not be afraid to express an opposing point of view. Peter will make fiscal responsibility a priority as well as bring a practical and prudent approach to the realities of educating our elementary age students. Please join me in voting for Peter Ricci for school committee member in Worthington’s town elections on Saturday, May 1.

Gail A. Bergeron
Worthington

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor should be 500 words or less in length. We require letter writers to include his or her name, town of residence and home telephone number. We must authenticate authorship prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions deemed to be libelous or contain unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks, defamation of character and offensive language. All unknown or alleged facts and quotations offered by the author need to cite credible, unbiased sources.

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OPINION

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Keep eyes on school curriculums

A lawsuit was filed in federal court on behalf of David Flynn. He is the father of two Dedham, Massachusetts Public School students. Flynn was removed from his position as head football coach after exercising his right as a citizen to raise concerns about his daughter’s seventh grade history class curriculum being changed to include biased coursework, on politics, race, gender equality and diversity (Flynn v. Forrest et. al. (No.21-cv-10256).

The lawsuit was filed in the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts, seeks damages against the superintendent, high school principal and high school athletic director for retaliating against Flynn for exercising his First Amendment rights.

The lawsuit details that in September 2020, Flynn’s daughter’s seventh grade history class, which was listed as “World Geography and Ancient History 1,” taught issues of race, gender, stereotypes, prejudices, discrimination, and politics.

Among the various factors were skin color, gender, age, physical appearance, and attire. “Black,” “aggressive body language,” and “wrong neighborhood” were among the “risk factors” purportedly assessed by the person identified as “White.” “White” and “Police officer” were among the “risk factors” purportedly assessed by the person identified as “Black.”

Concerned about the change in curriculum, Flynn and his wife contact-

ed the history teacher and principal of the school, then later Superintendent of the schools, and three members of the school committee to help resolve these issues with the curriculum. In October 2020, the Flynn’s removed their children from school. The Flynn’s list of concerns included actions of the Dedham Public Schools administrators and teachers.

In January 2021, Flynn, who had been the head football coach at Dedham High School since 2011, was called to a meeting with the superintendent, the principal, and athletic director. At the meeting Flynn was handed an email that the superintendent had sent to the Dedham School committee members and informed him that one of the com-

mittee members asked, “what are you going to do about this?” At the end of the meeting, Flynn was told that they “were going in a different direction” with the football program. Minutes later Flynn was removed as head coach because he “expressed significant philosophical differences with the direction, goals and values of the school district.”

This is a warning of what is coming at us. Parents, be ever diligent of what is going on in our schools. Ask questions of your kids, teachers, principal, and superintendent. Keep informed and participate in our schools.

Ted Cousineau
Blandford

HILLTOWN HISTORY
Hilltown Patriots

By Deborah Daniels

Last week, the Hilltown Hikers visited the historical graves of two patriots buried in Blandford. How did these two men, who both fought in the American Revolution, end up buried in Blandford? Giles Tracy born in New London, CT in 1758, served as a private in the Connecticut Militia and later enlisted as a marine aboard the ship the Oliver Cromwell. He was about 17 years old, and white. Jethro Jones enlisted in the Continental Army in Leicester, MA when he was about 41 years old, according to the records at the Massachusetts Soldiers and Sailors of the Revolutionary War Office. He was Black. Giles Tracy was taken prisoner by the British most likely when his ship the Oliver Cromwell was captured by the British in July of 1779. Most American prisoners suffered at the hands of the British. There was a notorious British prison ship, the HMS Jersey in New York Harbor that held prisoners in terrible conditions. It was said many American prisoners switched sides rather than be imprisoned on the Jersey. The ship was designed for 400 sailors and routinely had over 1,000 prisoners on board during the war. Was Giles Tracy imprisoned there? Jethro Jones spent time in a hospital in Albany in 1778. Was he wounded in battle? He survived and continued to serve in the army until the end of the war. We don’t know exactly what happened to these two men as soldiers, but both saw combat firsthand and experienced the trauma of war.

They survived and returned to civilian life, Giles was in his 20s and Jethro was in his middle 40s. Did they cross paths during the Revolution as soldiers? We don’t know. They did share a bond as veterans. Giles went on to become a farmer in Blandford and raised six children. Jethro, listed as a toolmaker, went on to work as a field hand for Giles, according to the Blandford Historical Society. He also had a wife and family and played the fiddle. Both were believed to have been buried near each other in the original cemetery. The details of these men’s lives have been lost to us.

What was it like to fight in the Revolution? Well to begin with there was no army in the beginning. The militia were patriots who volunteered to come to the defense of the local community. These were family men whose main job was to run the farm. After the battle of Lexington and Concord April 19, 1775, George Washington became commander of the newly created Continental Army. It was clear that he wanted soldiers who drilled and practiced battle strategy full time. So, to entice men to join the army, cash bounties and land warrants were offered for a commitment of three years of duty, later changed to agree to fight till



The statue of a Revolutionary soldier sits in front of the Otis Town Hall.

Submitted photos by Deborah Daniels

the end of the war.

What was your duty? You would stand on guard duty or do manual labor such as dig vaults (latrines) and build breastworks and you drilled daily for 8 hours marching in formation and practiced firing a musket. Your rucksack weighed around 45 pounds. You ate once a day from a food ration of one pound of beef, fish or pork, one pound of bread, dried veggies, one pint of milk and one quart of beer or cider per day. You were given one gill, four ounces, of whiskey which you were to put in your canteen to sterilize the water! A private earned about \$6.25 per month. Deductions were taken out of this for your uniform and gun. Most men who served were between the ages of 15 to 30, but you could enlist up to the age of 55.

The American Revolution statistics were grim; 8,000 soldiers were killed in battle, 25,000 were wounded, and 16,000 died from starvation and disease during the six years of war. Add in the fact that the Continental Army was supplemented with another 145,000 militia men who were not represented in the official count of war dead and you can understand how difficult it was to staff an army.

Initially, George Washington did not want Black soldiers admitted into the Continental Army. There was much concern about arming slaves to fight. However, when the loyalist Governor of Virginia offered freedom to any slave who committed to fight for the British, Washington quickly accepted Blacks into the military. Mind you many Blacks had already been fighting for the patriots at the start of the war in New England, notably Peter Salem and Salem Poor at the Battle of Bunker Hill in 1775.

As the war wore on George



A watercolor painting by M. Lefferts showing the variety of soldiers’ outfits in the American Revolution.

Online Image

Washington required that each state commit to supplying quotas of soldiers. This became a hardship for many states. When Rhode Island couldn’t raise enough soldiers to enlist, legislators promised freedom to all Black, Indian and mulatto men who enlisted. Promptly, 140 men signed up and remained as soldiers for the duration of the war. They were known as the R.I. First Regiment, predominantly Black soldiers who inspired fear even in the British Hessian mercenary fighters. The state of Virginia sent many Black slaves to fight in place of white slave owners. This was also done by other southern states. It has been estimated that 10-15% of the Continental Army soldiers were Black.

The British plotted some very dark schemes to win the war. They enticed slaves to run away and become soldiers for the British. They actively recruited slaves in the south not just to act as soldiers, but they were trying to reduce the skilled labor that supported the American economy from the south. Smallpox was a disease that was rampant among soldiers. The British were known to send infected slaves back to the plantations once they were infected. The British were immune to smallpox due to widespread vaccination that had already occurred in Europe. George Washington insisted on having all entering soldiers vaccinated for smallpox in January of 1777. Warfare was not limited to just the battlefield.

The War ended after the battle of Yorktown, VA in 1781. The British took some 50,000 slaves back to England at the end of the War, infuriating the American victors. Many of these slaves returned to the Caribbean, West Africa, and Nova Scotia to live as free men. These were the troubled times of war both Jethro and Giles were glad to put behind them. Is it any wonder they turned their eyes to savoring the peace in



A monument commemorating the Black patriots’ contribution to the Revolutionary War in Saratoga, NY.

Online Image

Blandford and tilling the land instead of burying the dead?

Be amazed that these states united in 1776 and won a war of independence. Let’s keep them united. Celebrate your patriotism.

Do you have a memory or historical curiosity from the Hilltowns that you’d like to share with your neighbors? Send your story and photos to countryjournal@turley.com.

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CHESTER

☆ CANDIDATE’S STATEMENT ☆

Duane C. Pease

To the residents of Chester, my name is Duane C. Pease and I am seeking a position on the Board of Health. I am currently a Light Commissioner for the Chester Municipal Electric Light Department, am a former selectman for the Town, and currently I am the Town Administrator for Middlefield. I feel my experience in municipal government makes me qualified for the Board of Health. The Board of Health will be facing many issues in the

coming years and will require a fiscally responsible person to fill that seat. Environmental issues and regulations continue to evolve, and many are unfunded mandates that require local municipalities to expend funds that may be difficult to fund. I also believe in open government and that all meetings and discussions should be done in a public forum with an opportunity for residents to voice their concerns. Please support me in my efforts to become a member of the Board of Health.

☆ CANDIDATE’S STATEMENT ☆

Greg Harrison

I am running for my second term on the Chester Board of Health. We have made some positive strides in town, most importantly the Department of Environmental Protection permitting approval at the transfer station. I have learned so much working in person at the transfer station, and working my Board of Health obligations including responding to complaints, health safety, food safety, sanitary conditions for our res-

idents and businesses and transfer station efficient operations. I would like to see things through to the finish, therefore I look forward to any and all challenges that lie ahead that can better improve the Town of Chester. I am proud to live in Chester and feel blessed because of the friends that my wife Cindy and I have made here. I owe Chester that much for what we have gained living here. Thank you for being such great friends and neighbors to us. Keep the mask on even when others don’t.

☆ CANDIDATE’S STATEMENT ☆

Jason Forgue

My name is Jason Forgue and I am running for selectman in the town of Chester. For almost a decade now I have grown increasingly involved in numerous aspects throughout our town and our community. As part of that involvement, I have learned a great deal about the many great attributes Chester has to offer its citizens, as well as several where we come up short. I am not a political person, nor am I overly politically correct on most occasions. My blunt, to-the-point nature, and lifelong struggle with the virtue of patience, has unfortunately rubbed some people the wrong way along my path. However, I believe myself to be a hard-working, effective realist that refuses to believe the mentality of maintaining the status quo is Chester’s best option. Locally, I intend to continue the fight for transparency and inclusion for all interested citizens as well as creating a long-term plan for our town to increase our financial stability for generations to come. At the state level, I refuse to simply stand

idly by and allow those on Beacon Hill to continue to not live up to their promises while our citizens are forced to make up the difference. While I don’t believe in conspiracy theories driving every action of our state legislators, I do think it is time to ramp up the calls for accountability and recognition. I plan to use my tenacity to make sure those calls are heard. I believe my combination of educational, professional, and philanthropic attributes make me an excellent candidate for selectman. My actions benefit all citizens of our community, from youths to seniors and everyone in between. I have always and will continue to show up and get involved when and where needed. While born and raised in a different part of Western Mass., I am proud to call Chester home. My wife and I have been happily raising our four children here, and plan to make this our home for life. I humbly request your vote for selectman on May 1st. I am an open book so please contact me anytime at 413-205-6504 if you have any specific questions or concerns.

PLEASE RECYCLE THIS NEWSPAPER

LABORATORY

from page 1

Garage, behind Carm’s Restaurant. “There’s a whole long list of things the Cannabis Commission asks for in support of an endorsement. That’s really the next big step that we’re in the process of completing,” Davé said. “Infrastructure needs to happen in parallel...Things like outfitting the facility or at least starting to order the machinery that needs to be brought in the facility. We don’t want to do nothing. You want to start in parallel.” Davé said the approval process with the CCC doesn’t have a definite timeframe, but typically doesn’t take longer than six months. However, that could always change. “They kind of hold all the cards. We thank them for a potential timeline, but we don’t expect them to be held to those timelines,” he said. As part of its agreement with the Selectboard, Canna Testing LLC will be trying to offer as many jobs as it can to local residents. Davé said there are some positions, like the lab technicians, which require certain training, but they’ll be looking for different opportunities to get residents involved. He also pointed

out the lab will create opportunities for other town vendors and workers to get involved. “The business is going to need people as drivers, as electricians, they’re going to need HVAC vendors, they’re going to need folks to dispose of the laboratory waste,” he said. “I think it’s going to create an insular opportunity for people in Chester.” Davé said the Canna Testing team was drawn to Chester for several reasons. Currently, all three of the testing labs in the state are in the eastern part of the state. Davé feels Chester is in a prime position to become the hub for all testing in Western Mass. “By putting a lab there, it will hopefully inspire people to start cannabis businesses in the western part of the state because now they’re not chucking their cannabis samples to the east,” he said. Davé also said they’re excited by the Selectboard’s attitude and progressive thought when it comes to improving the town. “We felt Chester was in a prime location and also I feel, having dealt with everybody so far, that they’re enthu-

siastic and thinking about the future and want Chester to undergo a level of renaissance that we can attract good, ethical businesses to Chester and allow it to grow,” he said. “It was a good match... They have the right spirit and mentality to support a business like this.” “We’re thrilled to have them come to town. We’re excited about this business,” Selectboard Chair Barbara Huntoon said. “We’re excited for the town. We look forward to having them be a part of Chester.” That feeling extends to the owners of Carm’s who they’ll be sharing the building with — Erin Patrick and Aaron Allen. “Obviously, they’ve had a positive impact on Chester,” Davé said. “They’re looking to improve Chester overall in terms of revitalization. I think it just made sense that we would partner with such progressive thinking.” The town, as part of the HCA, can benefit from the revenues of a marijuana business, up to 3%. Davé said Canna Testing LLC will be giving the town the maximum allowable amount in return. “We feel the town took a chance on

us and that should be rewarded with the maximum limit in terms of what we can return back,” Davé said. As a laboratory, Davé said the town’s traffic patterns won’t be altered as it won’t have a stream of customers coming in the same way a retail establishment would. They’re under heavy security and must meet state safety regulations. He said they also believe the public has been receptive to their proposal following a community outreach meeting last month. “We looked at it from a safety perspective, and I think the town feels pretty excited. This really puts Chester on the map in a very positive way,” he said. “The feedback and feeling I’ve gotten is its pretty positive. They want us to be very alert about what the residents of the town want and are going to be impacted by, and I think we have. We’ve been pretty transparent.” “The big thing was its two vans two times a week that bring products in for testing and take products back out,” said Town Administrator Kathe Warden. “There wasn’t going to be a lot of traffic.”

BLANDFORD

Selectboard requests maintenance reimbursement from DCAMM

By Mary Kronholm

BLANDFORD — Select Board members approved a request for \$1.7 million reimbursement for maintenance on Cobble Mountain Road. The three-member board authorized and signed a letter to Carol W. Gladstone, commissioner for the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance, asking yet again to open Cobble Mountain Road as access to Granville and beyond. The letter is from Town Administrator Joshua A. Garcia. He opened the letter by stating “With no presentation of any evidence to support the need to keep the road closed for public use indefinitely, it is unfortunate the state will consider keeping a public road

closed for the interest of a profit generating entity that serves no benefit to Town residents...we understand since DCAMM owns the road, the decision stands with you.” The profit generating entity referred to is Springfield Water and Sewer Commission, a quasi-public/private organization. Research has brought to light the information that since the abolishment of county government, the town has used “taxpayer funds through Chapter 90 to maintain the entire road from Route 23 to the town line.” Garcia further explained that since the road has been closed, the town has only partially maintained it citing inadequate funding to provide effective maintenance, therefore, “a considerable

amount of local appropriation has been applied to Cobble Mountain Road in the past 19 years to keep up with maintenance.” Since the town now knows that it does not own the road Garcia requested Cobble Mountain Road ownership be given to Blandford from Route 23 to the town line in order to appropriately work within Chapter 90 requirements. He further stated that if DCAMM “denies this request” Blandford will no longer perform maintenance on a road “we do not own” and asked for reimbursement of \$1,745,400 for the 19 years of roadwork done by the Town. The dollar amount includes both Chapter 90 funds and local appropriation. Garcia gave Gladstone an April 30 deadline after which the Town will “no



A postcard view of Cobble Mountain. Photo by Mary Kronholm

longer be maintaining the road” and the Town will seek an adjustment of Chapter 90 funding. The letter was copied to Sen. Adam Hinds, D-Pittsfield, and Rep. Smitty Pignatelli, D-Pittsfield, who represent Blandford in the state legislature.

WILLIAMSBURG

Open Space Master Plan gathers resident input, review

By Peter Spotts

WILLIAMSBURG — The Open Space Committee has been working on updating the town’s master plan since 2019 and needs public input and town official letters of review to progress to the next step.

The important part of keeping the plan updated, which has to be done every seven years, is it keeping the town eligible for grant funding, which can fund projects the town otherwise wouldn’t have the budget for.

“Letting the plan expire means you aren’t eligible for that funding,” Open Space Committee Chair Sally Loomis said. “I would draw people’s attention to the action plan and the goals because those are the element where we really focused our energy on the update.”

The action plan lays out the seven goals and objectives for the Open Space And Recreation plan including promoting the protection and enhancement of Williamsburg’s natural resources, legal protection of Williamsburg’s exemplary natural resources and open spaces, Sustainable management of Williamsburg’s exemplary natural resources and open spaces, a range of

recreational opportunities are offered to all town residents, keeping residents informed and engaged in a range of open space needs and issues, future investments in open space and recreation combating the sources and effects of climate change, and collaborating with neighboring towns to protect and manage natural resources and recreational offerings.

“I think there’s a real focus, as opposed to the last plan, more of a focus on climate change resilience overall and coordination with the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness work and thinking through some of the changes and some of the ways open space can contribute to climate change resilience,” said committee member Markelle Smith. “We just have a lot more data now.”

The full plan will be posted on the town website for all residents to review. Loomis said the comment period will be open for at least three to four weeks.

“In posting this for public comment, any public comments that are made on the plan get included in [the package],” she said.

As part of the plan process, the committee ran a public survey to see what residents were, or weren’t con-

cerned about when it comes to open space. Loomis presented the results to the Selectboard on Thursday, April 8.

“There’s great support for the Mill River Greenway and bicycles in general. People are really interested in more access to rivers and streams, particularly swimming holes,” Loomis said.

The elements that were rated of extreme importance by 230 respondents included preserving Burgy’s rural character included expanding connections and access to off-road trails; and preserving scenic views, protecting wildlife habitats, water quality, forests, and farmland. There was very little interest expressed in expanding and maintaining motorized trails.

“The reality is a lot of our open space in Williamsburg is under private ownership,” Loomis said. “We don’t really have any accessible trails in town right now so we scoped out what possibilities might exist.”

Loomis also gave the board a report on protected and Chapter 61 land in town. Chairman Bill Sayre is interested in if the plan will provide insight on how Chapter 61 effects the town’s tax revenue.

“There’s a significant savings cost

wise n that designation. Does the plan address...lack of tax revenue related to 61A?” he asked. “It’s a question that comes up.”

“It does note there’s significant land in Chapter 61 and that does offer a cost savings to private landowners who put their land into chapter,” Loomis said. “It doesn’t analyze that from the perspective of the town in terms of tax revenue. It doesn’t look at it necessarily through that lens.”

In order to move for approval from the state, the plan requires a letter of review from the Selectboard, Planning Board, and any public comments will be submitted with the plan as well. The board didn’t have many questions on April 8 as they need more time to review the full plan, but they praised the hard work the committee has put into the project the past couple years.

“I have to commend these folks for all the hard work they have done,” said Selectman Denise Banister.

Sayre added, “I think the town is very grateful for you and everything you’ve done, so thank you.”

The plan will be available on the Open Space Committee page on the town website, burgy.org.

VOTE

from page 1

“I think we’re extremely happy and I believed to see the second vote pass as well and by such a large margin once again,” said Owner’s Project Manager Steering Committee Chairman Jim Ayres.

The project will move into a more detailed design phase with its architect and OPM P3 Project Planning Professionals, Inc. As part of the process, the Selectboard is looking to assemble a new building committee to work on the project. Ayres said he anticipates it being a mix of current OPMSC members and new members.

“It will probably have some overlap from the current OPM but also bring in some residents with knowledge of building and construction,” he said.

“The board started talking about it at their last meeting. They were first starting to ask the current committee if any were interested in continuing,” Town Administrator Charlene Nardi said. “I think they’ll be reaching out to more people.”

Nardi added the board hopes to have the committee put together by the end of May.

The \$5.1 million proposal will construct the new safety complex in place of the Helen E. James School. It was a difficult decision for town officials, committee members, and residents to decide to take down the historic building. Nardi said she hopes in a few years, once the building is complete, any doubts will eb put aside once its community impact has been

realized.

“I’m just excited to see the town make a decision and move forward. It’s a big deal,” she said. In the long run I think this will be what’s best for the community.”

Ayres said the project will move into the design phase with hopes to be ready for bid in late summer.

“Although, the team right now is looking at the bid environment and trying to figure out the best way to time that,” he said.

If all goes according to plan, the demolition will take place at the end of summer, with the possibility for some construction before winter with the building being finished in 2022.

“The goal would be to begin the demolition process of the current building probably in late summer and have some of the initial construction in the fall,” Ayres said. “It would be a way of getting some of that preliminary work done, even if it’s just preparing the site.”

Ayres also added residents should know the tax rate impacts of the project will not affect this year. Fiscal 2023 or fiscal 2024 are the earliest possibilities for when the first tax rate increase due to the project will be felt.



Wildlife habitat and popular trail protected in Williamsburg

WILLIAMSBURG — Fifty-six acres of important wildlife habitat located off South Street in Williamsburg are now permanently protected by Hilltown Land Trust, through the donation of a conservation restriction by property owner Sandra Warren and her late husband Jim Locke.

The newly conserved land abuts the existing Petticoat Hill Reservation, creating a continuous block of over 100 acres of protected habitat, including areas identified as BioMap2 Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape by the state Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. Protecting these areas is vital to ensuring lasting biodiversity and will offer much needed habitat to rare and other native species. The property is also near the Unquomunk Watershed lands, owned and managed by the Williamsburg Water & Sewer Commission, and 1,000 acres of land recently protected by Hilltown Land Trust and other conservation organizations as part of the Brewer Brook Forest Conservation Project.

“Many species of wildlife depend on uninterrupted corridors of habitat,” said Hilltown Land Trust Executive Director Sally Loomis. “Being able to build on existing conservation efforts like we have here helps maximize the impact of our work.”

In addition to the habitat value of the property, the conservation restriction formalizes access to a popular local hiking

trail known as Locke’s Loop. Connecting to a network of trails on Petticoat Hill Reservation, the public will be able to permanently access the property’s trail system for hiking, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, and other non-motorized recreational activities. Locke’s Loop also provides suitable access for wildlife viewing and educational programs on the property.

“The past year has seen a tremendous increase in the usage of trails in our region, and we’re happy that this project will keep a local favorite open and accessible to the public,” said Loomis.

In 1924 a portion of the original farm property was granted to The Trustees — then known as The Trustees of Public Reservations — the world’s first nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to holding land for public use-adding to the recently established Petticoat Hill Reservation. Warren’s current gift follows in this long history of conservation, a legacy she and her late husband Jim Locke took seriously.

“Jim truly loved this land, and enjoyed opening up its trails for public use. Knowing that it will be protected forever for public access would bring him great satisfaction,” Warren said. “I am happy to have worked with Hilltown Land Trust to ensure future generations will be able to enjoy this beautiful land.”

People interested in accessing the land can visit www.hilltownlandtrust.org to download a map and learn more.

RUSSELL

Lunches available at Senior Center

RUSSELL — Seniors can enjoy a delicious fresh cooked meal without stepping into the kitchen. Twice each week, Highland Valley Elder Services delivers freshly made take and eat lunches to the Russell Senior Center.

Distributed at noon on Tuesday and Thursday, the meals are specially prepared to meet the dietary needs of the older members of our community. While there is no charge for the meal, a

\$3 donation is suggested.

To reserve a meal, call the Russell COA at 413-862-6217 two days before the lunch service day.

The menu on Tuesday, April 27, is vegetable lasagna with primavera Italian blend, apple juice, whole wheat roll, and birthday cake. The menu on Thursday, April 29, is chicken cacciatore, split pea soup, cavatappi noodles, rye bread, and chilled peaches.

Final weekend for Noble View story walk

RUSSELL — The Hilltown Family Center and The Appalachian Mountain Club invite families to a story walk at Noble View Outdoor Center, located at 635 South Quarter Road in Russell.

Pages of “I Went Walking” by Sue Williams will adorn the 0.4-mile length of Mac Ross Trail which rises to a spectacular hilltop view. “I Went Walking” will remain on the trail for self-guided story walks until Monday, April 26.

Families are invited to come at any time, no registration required, during daylight hours to walk the trail and read the book at their leisure. Please be aware

that no restroom facilities are available at Noble View at this time and this trail is not handicapped accessible or suitable for strollers. Participants are to adhere to all posted AMC and Hilltown Family Center COVID-19 protocols including wearing a mask and social distancing.

This story walk was generously funded by a Community Development Block Grant through the Town of Chester and in collaboration with the Hilltown Family Center and the volunteers and resources of the Appalachian Mountain Club. There is no charge to participants for this story walk.

WESTHAMPTON

Pollinator Committee accomplishes mission

By Shelby Macri

WESTHAMPTON — The Pollinators Committee and the Municipal Vulnerability Planning core group met with the Selectboard to discuss their respective projects on Monday, April 12.

The Pollinator Committee wants to continue as an educational and awareness board rather than its current committee status, as the guidelines for the committee were decided during last Annual Town Meeting.

“The committee has completed what was set in front of us, our task was to look over this for a year and come back with a solution,” Selectboard member Maureen Dempsey said. “We would like to continue on an educational basis, I know another member wants to host walks and inform people on habitats.”

Dempsey submitted a resolution to the Selectboard declaring Westhampton to be a pollinator-friendly community. This resolution’s purpose is to increase pollinator education and to take action to

further support the health of pollinators. The resolution outlines different reasons for the decline of pollinators including loss of habitat, impacts of climate change, increase in artificial lighting, exposure to pesticides and other contaminants, and the arrival of non-native parasites and pathogens.

To help the pollinators within town the resolution states that bees, butterflies, and other pollinators are vital to our ecosystem, providing essential services for crops and contributing to the local agricultural economy. The resolution states, “as a right-to-farm community, our action in support of pollinator health concurrently supports local farms. In addition, these efforts increase community resilience, enhance food security and contribute to the overall health of the environment.”

The resolution also outlines a federal strategy to promote the health of honeybees and other pollinators, addressing the fact that pollinators contribute over 15 billion dollars in agricultural value to the United States each year. The state created

a Pollinator Protection Plan in 2017 giving management practices and actions to benefit pollinators.

By declaring the town of Westhampton as a Pollinator-Friendly Community, the town is encouraged to adopt the policies and practices that will support pollinator health, including increasing community education on pollinators and their health, following pollinator-friendly best practices that are outlined in the Massachusetts Pollinator Protection Plan, and to expand pollinator Habitat on town properties.

The board discussed the resolution and agreed that the committee had accomplished its task; in regard to the committee continuing as an educational and awareness board, there is more to come. Chair Phil Dowling told Dempsey the committee may have to come up with a different name if they were made a board. Within a few meetings, the town may be looking out for an upgraded version of the Pollinator Committee.

There will be an MVP listening ses-

sion on Thursday, April 29, from 7 to 8 p.m. on Zoom to discuss MVP planning grants. Interested residents can find the online meeting information on the town website. The session will have an MVP program overview, the strengths and vulnerabilities in town, climate change in town, the priorities of town, and then there is a section for discussion and questions.

For those interested in commenting, there is a link to an online and regular comment form on the meeting information on the town website, westhampton-ma.com. The listening session’s agenda is also listed, and people can review that document as well.

Residents are encouraged to keep an eye on the town website as more planning goes into a scaled down version of the usual Memorial Day ceremony. Dempsey and Administrative Assistant Cheryl Provost discussed securing a guest speaker for the event and Emergency Management Director Steve Holt is also planning something for the event.

MVP listening session meet April 29

WESTHAMPTON — Residents are invited to join a discussion about the town’s municipal vulnerability preparedness on Thursday, April 29, from 7 to 8 p.m.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Governor’s guidelines for distancing and gatherings, the meeting

will be held virtually. Login details for the Zoom meeting are available on the town website, Westhampton-ma.com.

The discussion will include an overview of the MVP program, climate change in Westhampton, town strengths and vulnerabilities, priorities, and discussions or questions.

WESTHAMPTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

WESTHAMPTON — The Westhampton Public Library is partnering with Grown in Westhampton and local residents to install a pollinator garden featuring early and late blooming plants this spring.

Planting days will be on Saturday May 1, May 15, and May 29 from 10 a.m. to noon. Bring gardening tools and stop by to lend a hand or come say hello. This project is being funded by American Library Association’s Resilient Communities program, The Friends of Westhampton Library, and Gardener’s Supply Company. All herbs and compost will be sourced locally by Intervale Farm and Bridgmont Farm respectively.

The library will hold Bike Maintenance 101 on Saturday, May 22, at 1 p.m. Learn about bikes and its parts and get hands-on experience fixing a flat tire. The program will review how to remove and install bike wheels and tires, patching and replacing tubes, and routine maintenance. All are welcome to bring their own bike, bike pumps, tools, and any questions about repair and maintenance.

Virtual Book Group will return on Tuesday, May 25, at 7 p.m. It meets once a month and is open to new members. They are currently debating its next book

to read. For Zoom login information, contact westhampton@cwmares.org.

The Spring Adult/Teen Craft has two kits available including colorful branches and accordion butterflies. To request a kit, contact mschwelm@cwmares.org.

Join Mary for outdoor play with large scale toys like hula hoops and steppingstones. Connect with other families safely and beat the social isolation on Tuesdays from 3 to 4:30 p.m. Playgroup will be canceled in the case of inclement weather.

Youth Service Librarian Emily Wayne hosts online story time on Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m. Contact ewayne@cwmares.org for Zoom login information and beat social isolation with other families.

Effective April 20, the library will have curbside only pickup on Monday and Thursday from 2 to 8 p.m. Seniors will have browsing hours on Tuesday from 9 a.m. to noon with browsing for all open from 1 to 5 p.m.

Browsing for all will be available on Wednesday from 1 to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.

No appointment is necessary for in-person browsing. For more information, visit the Westhampton Public Library page on westhampton-ma.com or contact 413-527-5386.



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SCHOOLS & YOUTH

SIGNING DAY

HIGH SCORE



From left; Hampshire Regional seniors Lila Labrie, Maggie Rubeck, and Maddie Pond sign acceptance papers to universities under the direction of Morgan Mitchell. All three seniors were outstanding in their sports programs at HRHS.

Submitted photo by Norm Cotnoir



Hampshire Regional Basketball Coach Don Labrie present senior Maddie Pond with the game ball after she scored her 1,000th career point. Known for her three-point shots, Pond will be attending Westfield University.

Submitted photo by Norm Cotnoir

FUNDS

from page 1

the alternative assessment, but it's now a \$0 increase. However, under the statutory method, Blandford can still save \$148,593 if all six towns do not vote in favor of the alternative assessment.

Middlefield is also facing a \$111,945 saving under the statutory method. Under the alternative assessment, the town would save \$8,788 with the new level funded assessments.

Montgomery and Chester both face six figure increases under the statutory method. Montgomery will have an increase of \$107,037 and Chester \$106,109 if the alternative assessment doesn't pass. Under the previous alternative assessment numbers, Montgomery had an increase of \$17,500 and Chester increased \$27,162 before the additional Gateway funds level funded the assessments.

Russell has a projected assessment increase of \$41,548 under statutory and Huntington will have an assessment decrease of \$2,641 under statutory. Thanks to the level funding of the

alternative assessment, Russell will not have an increase of \$37,297, if it passes, which was the alternative assessment amount projected before level funding.

The alternative assessment was implemented to eliminate the large swings from year to year and spread district assessments equally across the six towns. Two towns increasing by more than \$100,000 while two towns would save more than \$100,000 under the statutory method this year is the scenario the district is trying to avoid.

All six towns must approve the alternative assessment in order for it to pass. If one town does not vote in favor, the towns will have to consider the statutory assessments. If the town's do not vote a budget during this process, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education may come in and set a 1/12 budget.

For more information on the Gateway budget and town assessments, visit grsd.org.

Senior named NHS semifinalist

The National Honor Society announced that Parker Atkin, a high school senior at Gateway Regional High School and member of NHS, has been selected as an NHS Scholarship semifinalist. Atkin was chosen from nearly 10,000 applicants and will receive a \$3,200 scholarship toward higher education.

Since 1946, more than \$19 million in scholarships have been awarded to outstanding NHS senior members to support college access and student success. The scholarship program is supported by the parent organization of NHS, the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

In the 100 years since NHS was founded in 1921, members have been making a difference in their schools and communities, and the NHS Scholarship is NASSP's way of recognizing the most exceptional of these student leaders. Recipients are chosen based on their demonstrated work to support the four

pillars of NHS: scholarship, service, leadership, and character.

"Parker exemplifies the four pillars of NHS, while bringing her own creativity to every new challenge," said Gateway Curriculum Coordinator Deanna LeBlanc. "Parker's dedication to social justice and inclusion in our school and community have made a lasting impression on many staff and students at Gateway. Congratulations to our NHS Scholarship recipient, Parker Atkin!"

Atkin is currently taking an independent study as a senior, with a goal of creating a theme park attraction from market research straight through the prototype and pitching of the concept. She has created storyboards, demo mechanisms, produced lengthy market analysis based on detailed research, and is currently preparing to pitch the project to a panel of adults at Gateway.

For more information about the NHS, the scholarship, and the 2021 recipients, visit www.nhs.us.



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WORTHINGTON

BUDGET

from page 1

“We feel the need to make the police chief into a full-time position, so that’s the increase in his salary. The chief is also recommending we hire a second full-time officer, so that’s why the second line is in there,” said Selectboard Chairman Charley Rose. “I don’t think we’re going to necessarily recommend or not recommend [it]; we’ll leave it to the town to decide.”

This year’s school budget is presented in Article 3. Elementary Education rose about \$63,000 while Secondary Education decreased about \$17,500 for a combined fiscal 2022 total of \$1,211,756.09. This year, the town’s vocational costs will be \$190,817.

The school is also seeking the purchase of 10 60-inch round tables funded by \$18,051.90 from the Conwell Stabilization Fund. The town also owes \$77,172 to the Gateway Regional School District for capital and Massachusetts School Building Authority payback costs in Article 8.

The proposed fiscal 2022 budget for the town this year has been kept to minimal increases across most line items, with the largest notable increase being Assessor’s Revaluation, which is going from \$3,900 last year to \$19,950 this year.

“Assessors every five years do a revaluation, so that’s why that’s higher,” Rose said.

Capital costs proposed on the warrant this year from the General Stabilization Fund include \$60,000 for a new Diamond Heavy Duty Wheel Loader Boom Mower; \$135,350 for a new 2021 CAT 930M Loader; \$119,450 for a new 310SL HL Backhoe; \$3,500 to contract services to paint the front of Town Hall; \$1,140 to replace the basement windows and chimney cap of Town Hall; \$1,710 to rebuild and bring up to code the stairs, handrail, and platform at the Transfer Station; \$9,500 to hire the Collins Center to provide an Elected Officials Compensation Study and an Employee Handbook; \$10,000 to establish a reserve fund for unforeseen or extraordinary expenditures; \$451,937 will be added to stabilization from Free Cash.

“He’s wanted the over the guard rail mower and it got defeated last year,” Rose said. “Since last year, he’s

made this arrangement with the town of Chesterfield to share a mower and this mower will mount on the front of the loader...The plan would be we’d have the same loader as Chesterfield, and share the one mower between us.”

Article 28 asks the town to approve \$233,607 from Chapter 90 for road construction and maintenance.

Article 31 asks the town to impose a local sales tax of 3% on the sale of recreational marijuana originating within the Town by a vendor. This includes the sale of recreational marijuana, marijuana products, and marijuana edibles and would take effect on the first day of the calendar quarter at least 30 days after the vote at Annual Town Meeting.

“Instead of asking for host agreements, we’ll just charge a sales tax,” Rose said.

Article 34 asks the vote to rescind the authorized and unissued debt for the purchase of the Moran Property, the Highway five-ton Dump truck, and the Highway Loader. The three items carry a combined debt total of \$50,500.

“It’s stuff we authorized borrowing for that we didn’t spend,” Rose said. “We just didn’t spend it all and it’s pretty normal to authorize more than you need.”

At the end of the warrant is the citizen petition submitted to reduce the minimum frontage required for a principal building or structure from, 400 feet to 280 feet. The petition argues Worthington’s current bylaws are too restrictive and restrict the ability for families to develop affordable housing in town.

“The Town of Worthington has the highest median house value of any surrounding town,” states the petition. “Given the lack of affordable housing, the proposed By-Law change would decrease the required frontage, enabling more homes to be built using the existing roadways and infrastructure of the Town. Decreased lot frontage will also provide lower cost building lots, making it more feasible to construct starter homes for young families in the community.”

A full copy of the 36-article warrant is available on the town website, worthington-ma.us.

Conwell renovations put on hold

WORTHINGTON — Following disappointingly high bids, the Selectboard has decided not to pursue contracts for needed improvements to the R.H. Conwell Elementary School.

The Selectboard has been working for some time on a project to upgrade the 1971 addition to the Conwell School. This is the portion that contains the gymnasium/cafeteria, the art room, another classroom and some hallways connecting it to the original school.

Discussions about a renovation project began after a heating pipe freeze-up caused some damage to the art room. In the process of doing repairs, and with the valuable help of local architect and Town Moderator Kevin O’Connor, the town determined that the major problem was the lack of insulation in the exterior envelope of the addition. There is none at all in the sloped ceilings and in the gymnasium/cafeteria wall facing the street. They also learned that the peeling siding was due to no insulation and vapor barrier issues.

In addition, there is evidence of sprinkler system problems that are likely due to faulty on-site pipe-threading work when the system was installed. As a result of the above, and with the help of a state grant evaluate town infrastructure needs obtained in 2019 with Steve Kulik’s help, the town hired Laura Fitch, an area architect, to develop a plan to tackle both issues.

In early Spring, 2020, as the town was preparing to go to bid, COVID-19 derailed plans to bring a ready to go project proposal to Town Meeting with work to be done that Summer. The project was then professionally estimated to cost approximately \$400,000, exclusive of architect fees.

In January, the town was deter-

mined to put the project out to bid and did so on March 3. Due apparently to the easing of the covid crisis, pent-up construction demand they received only one state-mandated sub-bid for sprinkler work. That was rejected and re-solicited in late March as it was over twice the professional cost estimate from a year earlier.

General contractor bids were opened on April 14 and the news was even worse. Although three bids were received, the lowest was \$535,000, not including sprinkler replacement which would have raised the total cost to an estimated \$585,000.00. It further appeared very unlikely the town would get any sprinkler sub-bids at all, even after directly contacting all state-certified sprinkler sub-contractors in the state. The most apparent reason for this disappointing result is a combination of pent-up public and commercial construction demand together with extremely large increases in lumber and other construction material prices along with supply shortages.

As a result, the Selectboard, after consulting with the Finance and School Committees last Wednesday, April 14, has voted to reject the general bids and to cancel the sprinkler re-bid that was scheduled for opening April 21. The board is now planning to re-examine the project scope and the possibility of re-bidding and undertaking the work either entirely or in stages, starting next Summer. It is likely no longer possible to do any of the project work this year which, especially considering the unsightly peeling siding, is very unfortunate. The Selectboard strongly believes the project costs obtained to date were simply too high to justify seeking approval from town voters at this time.

Potted plants available from COA

WORTHINGTON — In celebration of May Day, the Worthington Council on Aging will be distributing curbside pickup one four-inch colorful potted plant per household, in front of the Worthington Congregational Church.

The giveaway will take place on Monday, April 26, from 11 a.m. to noon. Please order in advance by calling 413-238-1999. Supply is limited. This event is underwritten by the Rolland Fund.

☆ CANDIDATE’S STATEMENT ☆

Pam Thompson

When I first ran for school committee three years ago, I offered my experience of 20+ years as an educator — I’ve taught students ranging in age from elementary school to the adults in the free college program I direct in Holyoke and as a parent of two Worthington kids, now a recent college graduate and college sophomore.

This time around, I also bring the experience of having been on the committee for these last three challenging years. During the pandemic, we were pressed to learn about and make decisions that school leaders had never had to make before. Our little school has weathered these difficult times well (those tents!). Our in-person outdoor classrooms may just be the best place to be a student in the Commonwealth this year.

I suspect anyone who’s ever served on a town committee understands that however personally inclined or professionally experienced you are, there’s still a lot to learn about how our systems work. I’ve been proud to work alongside

the dedicated folks in the school and on the committee. I’ve learned a lot, and would love to build on that foundation in a new term.

I bring to the school committee the skills and the convictions I’ve developed over a lifetime as a writer and teacher, including an appetite for listening and for research. In my behind-the-scenes work for the committee, I write, edit, and read. I track state legislation and advocate with elected officials for policies that benefit our school and students. I am always thinking about how people learn, and how we (including the youngest among us) might better acquire the skills necessary to flourish and to shape positively the communities in which we live. My experiences in a variety of educational settings have nourished my passion for helping to make the highest quality education available for everyone.

Our public elementary school is our hope for the future. I am humbled to have been given a chance to be part of this essential work and would be honored to have your support to continue to serve our community.

☆ CANDIDATE’S STATEMENT ☆

Deb Clapp

I am pleased to be a candidate for school committee in Worthington. I bought a home here three years ago and have been living here full time for a year. This is a wonderful town, and I am so happy to call it home. The R.H. Conwell School is a centerpiece of community life, and, I believe, an important part of what makes Worthington so special; serving our families with an excellent elementary education serves all of us by creating educated, informed good citizens. I think that a good education is key to so many things in life and I am very proud to be living in a town that provides our children with such an education.

The school committee is responsible to the town for excellent financial, personnel and educational stewardship. As a new member of the committee I would work hard to make sure that we accomplish those goals as well as to keep the school one in which the learning environment is focused on the basics but also takes advantage of our traditions and our landscape. I would work to see that students are also offered enrichment activities that speak to their individual interests. Together we can also work towards equity among our students, ensuring that each student has the same opportunity to succeed in school regardless of economic circumstances, learning differences, race or gender differences.

Open communication between the school committee and all citizens of Worthington is important to me, I would work alongside the committee and the Principal/Superintendent to enhance the work they are already doing to ensure clear and consistent communication and to balance the needs of the entire community with those of the school.

My work experience as a non-profit arts administrator and my volunteer experience as a board member of several organizations makes me a great candidate. I believe my outside perspective may bring new solutions to ongoing challenges in our school. My career has helped me to develop skills that I think will be valuable to the school committee. As the Executive Director of an organization that serves more than 300 theatres in Chicago, I have successfully managed budgets of more than \$3 million. I have experience in advocacy at the local, state and national level. I have been a successful fundraiser for the arts, working with foundations, individuals and government entities as well as doing fundraising events. With several partners I started a theatre education program in Chicago that currently serves more than 1000 students. But most of all, I have a passion for education, and believe strongly in service to my community. I hope you will agree that I will be an excellent addition to the School Committee.



How to help kids make friends at school

The average student likely spends more time at school and participating in extracurricular activities with classmates than he or she does at home. In close proximity to so many peers, it may seem like making friends would be a snap. However, some students have trouble connecting and can use a little push to make friends.

The family and parenting resource Parenting Science notes that research indicates that the most popular children are those who exemplify certain traits. These traits include being caring; a willingness to share; a willingness to offer help; and strong verbal skills. Children who embrace these traits may prove better at making friends. Parents may find that youngsters need some encouragement to build their social circles, and the following are some ways parents can offer that encouragement.

- Encourage kids to seek out someone on their own. It may be challenging to walk up to a group and introduce yourself. Encourage students to seek out someone who is alone and then strike up a conversation, which can be less intimidating than approaching a group. Emphasize to kids that other students may also be a little shy and looking to make friends.
- Practice conversation starters at home. Children can work with their parents to come up with topics that can help foster communication. These can include ice breakers and common interests, such as favorite television shows or video games.
- Teach kids approachable body lan-

guage. Wearing earbuds or exhibiting negative body language, such as crossed arms or avoiding eye contact, can make a person seem less approachable. Smiling, engaging in conversation and being friendly can make it easier to make friends.

- Ask teachers to help. The education resource Understood says teachers can give children responsibilities, such as the opportunity to hand out snacks or papers, which can build confidence and provide opportunities for kids to converse with their peers.
- Help children be active listeners.

An active listener is someone who makes it clear that he or she is paying attention. Making eye contact, orienting

the body toward the speaker and making relevant verbal responses are some active listening strategies that can help kids more fully engage with their peers. Feeling valued and listened to may encourage other children to be more friendly and engaging.

- Ask open questions. The social networking advisement site Young Scot suggests having students ask open questions, such as: "How was your summer?" or "What sports do you like to play?" These types of questions can

kick-start in-depth conversations.

- Join a team or club. Students often make friends in social or extracurricular settings, such as on a sports team. With a shared interest, it's easy to find topics to discuss.

Making friends in school can make time spent in the classroom more enjoyable for youngsters.

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5 reasons why summer camp is a good choice for kids

Summer vacation offers students a respite from lessons and the routine of school. Children might once have eagerly awaited those final days of classes so they could lounge poolside, skip rocks across ponds and spend the long days of the season playing with friends. But many of today's youngsters spend much of their summer vacations indoors playing with their digital devices.

Perhaps that's why one of the last vestiges of the classic summer vacation escape — summer camp — remains such a viable option for parents who want their children to get outdoors once the school year ends.

Although kids needn't be in camp all summer long, a week or two can benefit campers of all ages. The following are five reasons why summer camp might be the right fit this year.

1. Explore talents. Summer camps help young people explore their unique interests and talents. Under an organized, yet often easygoing, camp schedule, kids can dabble in sports, arts and crafts, leadership, community support,

and so many other activities that may not be fully available to them elsewhere.

2. Physical activity: Lots of camps build their itineraries around physical activities that takes place outdoors. Campers may spend their time swimming, running, hiking, playing sports, climbing, and so much more. This can be a welcome change for kids accustomed to living sedentary lifestyles. Regular physical activity has many health benefits and can set a foundation for healthy habits as an adult.

3. Gain confidence. Day and sleep-away camps offer campers the opportunity to get comfortable in their own skin. Camps can foster activities in self-esteem by removing the academic measures of success and fill in with noncompetitive opportunities to succeed. Campers learn independence, decision-making skills and the ability to thrive outside of the shadow of their parents, siblings or other students.

4. Try new things. Camp gives children the chance to try new things, whether that's learning to cook, exploring

new environments or embracing a new sport or leisure activity. Opening oneself up to new opportunities can build character and prove enlightening for children.

Camps benefit children in a variety

of ways. Lessons learned in camp can strengthen values, build confidence, develop coping mechanisms when adversity strikes, and enable campers to make lifelong friends.





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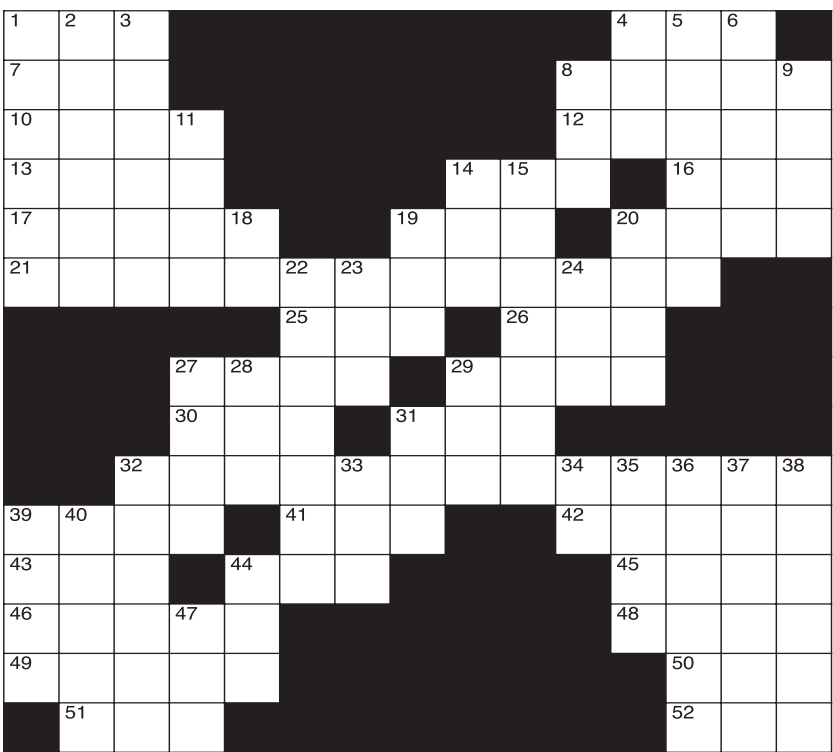
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CLUES ACROSS

- Ocean surface indicator (abbr.)
- American time
- Satisfaction
- Diving duck
- Very small amount
- Metrical units
- An ignorant or foolish person
- Sino-Soviet block (abbr.)
- It may sting you
- Turn outward
- Perform on stage
- “CSI” actor George
- Localities
- Make a choice
- Indicates position
- One of Thor’s names

- Indian musical rhythmic pattern
- “The Raven” author
- Take in solid food
- Legendary QB
- Sorrels
- Organization of nations
- Texas pharmaceutical company
- Mathematical term
- Expression of disappointment
- Abba __, Israeli politician
- Hide away
- Salad restaurant
- Daughters of Boreas (mythology)
- Men’s fashion

CLUES DOWN

- Make unhappy
- Heard the confession of
- Capital of Taiwan
- Fiddler crab
- Brazilian dances
- Fit with device to assist breathing
- Brother or sister
- Pastries
- “Lone Survivor” director Peter
- Boat type (abbr.)
- Apertures (biology)
- Suffix
- Creative endeavor
- Icelandic poem

- Spanish dances
- Town in Central Italy
- Cars need it
- Mimics
- Rocky peak
- Cigarette (slang)
- One point south of due east
- Soap actress Braun
- Large domesticated wild ox
- Island nation
- Appear
- Addictive practices
- Loss of control of one’s body
- Type of poster
- Greek mountain
- Funny person
- One and only
- Pouch

THIS WEEK’S HOROSCOPES

ARIES

Mar 21/Apr 20

Some things are entirely out of your control, Aries. You may come up against some such obstacles this week. Focus your energy on the things you can control.

CANCER

Jun 22/Jul 22

Cancer, some focus and harmony enables you to find balance in your personal and professional relationships. You will begin to see eye-to-eye with many people.

LIBRA

Sept 23/Oct 23

Take a break from overthinking, Libra. Involve yourself with pleasurable activities that don't require a lot of forethought. Others can join the fun.

CAPRICORN

Dec 22/Jan 20

People may demand a little more of your time in the days ahead, Capricorn. If you are not sure you can devote extra effort, tell these people as soon as possible.

TAURUS

Apr 21/May 21

Taurus, if you're seeking new horizons, establish a game plan and then do your homework. This will help determine if it is practical to make a move.

LEO

Jul 23/Aug 23

It is a good thing to center yourself emotionally because many decisions are heading your way, Leo. You may find ideas and plans center around domestic issues.

SCORPIO

Oct 24/Nov 22

This is a good week to focus attention on your personal needs, Scorpio. Perhaps you are looking for personal fulfillment. Try volunteer work.

AQUARIUS

Jan 21/Feb 18

Disagreements can arise if others are not reading you well, Aquarius. Focus your efforts on effective communication this week to avoid any confusion.

GEMINI

May 22/Jun 21

Your expressiveness and affections are drawn out this week. It could put you in the mood to push some limits socially or creatively. Chances are things will work out well.

VIRGO

Aug 24/Sept 22

You are inclined to seek some mental stimulation this week, Virgo. Invest in some puzzles or even a recreational pursuit such as an escape room experience.

SAGITTARIUS

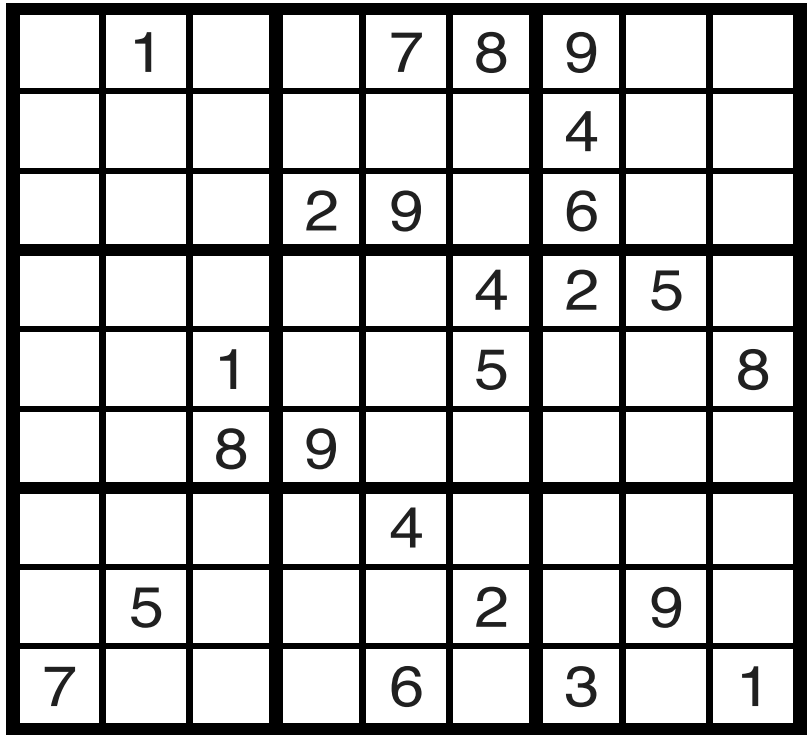
Nov 23/Dec 21

Others may be elusive this week, Sagittarius. Don't take it as a sign of your relationships being in need of mending. Others are just busy, so enjoy the down time.

PISCES

Feb 19/Mar 20

You don't need to know every detail of an issue to be able to take a side or a stance, Pisces. Your ability to make choices will improve.



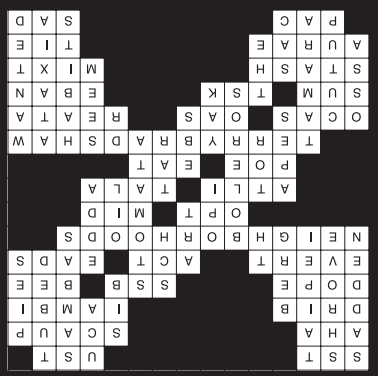
SUDOKU

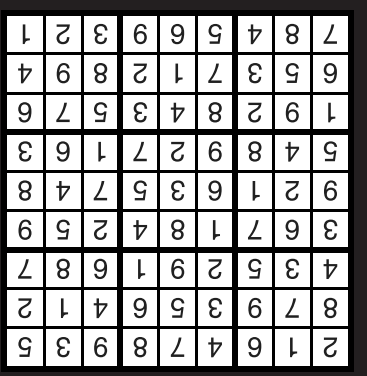
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answers





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OTIS

Register to vote by Wednesday, April 28

OTIS — The deadline to register to vote in the May 18 Annual Town meeting and May 25 Town Election is Wednesday, April 28.

Special registration hours will be held from 2 to 4 p.m. and 7 to 8 p.m. at the Town Hall, 1 North Main Road.



MIDDLEFIELD

MIDDLEFIELD SENIOR CENTER

Lunch is served at the Senior Center, 169 Skyline Trail, Middlefield, each Wednesday at noon.

A \$3 donation is suggested. Reservations should be made, and meal choice stated, by calling and leaving a message at 413-623-9990 the Monday before. Pick-up and delivery are available. The menu on Wednesday, April 28, is baked pollock with lemon dill, Brussel sprouts, rice pilaf, rye bread, and fruit crunch bar.

BECKET

PLANTS

from page 1

thing, just a place to be.”

After the first garden for her friend, Szenda and four or five people from town helped to make a garden for another resident Andy. From there, more people came by to add to the garden space and find help and healing in the surrounding gardens. One woman planted a few flowers for a lost son, someone planted a hickory tree for their brother, a strawberry patch for a loved neighbor, and more as people found out about the spot. Szenda said there are about 32 acres of land, but she only cleared two-and-a-half acres to start and will see if the interest continues strong to warrant expanding.

The serenity gardens are not an official spot, though Szenda and a few others helped to create a design from rocks of the initials “S.G.” making it official to them. Last summer, there were many hummingbirds around, leading people to put up hummingbird feeders in a nearby tree, and a bench under the tree for people to sit and remember or just enjoy the space. Someone donated a picnic bench and Szenda’s son helped to install a pump in a well on the property to help maintain the plants.

Szenda said although this just hap-

pened, she’s planning for the gardens to be more organized in the future, like cleaning up the land, creating paths for people through the gardens, more plots for gardens, and more to make the gardens run appropriately.

“Right now, it’s just a normal garden, just something to do and somewhere to remember and heal. It’s done so much for me and my friends and the people who come here,” Szenda said. “It was moving just to be a part of it, and it’s nice because the people who come here a lot upkeep the gardens.”

She said if something needs to be weeded, they weed it; if something needs to be to be helped, they help it. Currently, people call Szenda and ask to plant a garden, she asks that anyone interested in creating a garden contact her first. She tries to visit the garden as often as she can, but shares that Saturdays are her best days, letting people know that she’ll accompany them with their garden if needed or wanted. Szenda asks that people take care of their gardens, but she knows the regulars will take care of things if they feel moved to.

Szenda said one person planted a few fake flowers because they want-

ed to make a garden but has a “dead thumb” when it comes to plants. She allows people to be creative in making their garden’s and enjoys the atmosphere that has been created by the community of the gardens. While located in the hilltowns, there’s also people from towns as far as Belchertown and Chicopee who’ve come to the join the gardens; Szenda shared a story of a Springfield family who came out to create a garden together. The gardens are for anyone who feels they’d like to create one in order to remember and celebrate the life of someone dear to them.

“This place is my serenity; I enjoy how I feel when I’m there at the gardens are with the other people who visit. It’s been very healing for me in many ways, especially since I had recently had a stroke,” Szenda said. “I went out to the gardens and dug hole, moved rocks, planted things, and nobody saw it as me fumbling my way about or me getting stronger after this, they just saw pretty flowers. From there, they jumped in and we did things together.”

Serenity gardens gives visitors a chance to talk, share, laugh, and remember; but most importantly it is a

place to be with others, which was healing for Szenda and others. She said it’s better to feel the feelings than to stuff them down, and the gardens are a way to heal that is working for many people. Though the space has grown quite popular she’s just taking things day by day.

“I didn’t know it’d be like this, I was just going to plant a little garden,” Szenda said.

She took a few pictures of the space before the garden was planted and has thought of getting someone to photograph the gardens when they’re in full bloom to put both sets in an album.

Szenda is welcoming people to create their own garden, requesting them to contact her beforehand and to know a few things before coming including to bring a walking stick and to be prepared that it doesn’t have an official address. Szenda will give interested gardeners directions and information when they call her; she can be reached at 413-454-2478 and will return calls as fast as she can.

While people are welcome to plant gardens now, Szenda shared that only a few things are blooming currently, but by the time summer comes more things will be open and lively.

PUBLIC NOTICES

Town of Williamsburg
Notice of
Public Tree Hearing
Planning Board
and Tree Warden
Monday, May 3, 2021
at 7 p.m. via Zoom.

Access to the Zoom link on the Planning Board Agenda www.burgy.org under Calendars

Pursuant to MGL Chapter 87, section 3, a public hearing will be held on Monday, May 3, 2021 via Zoom to consider a request to remove the trees listed below at 61 Old Goshen Road. The trees are marked with yellow caution tape along with a copy of this notice.

(8) Ash ranging from 5"-18" DBH
(3) Oak ranging from 5"-6" DBH
(2) Soft Maple - 6" and 18" DBH
(1) Sugar Maple - 13" DBH
(2) Cherry - 7" and 10" DBH
04/22, 04/29/2021

Town of Blandford, MA
Planning Board
NOTICE OF
PUBLIC HEARING

Due to the current pandemic caused by covid-19, there has been a suspension of certain provisions of the open meeting law G.L.C. 30A 18, as well as limitation on the size of gatherings. Please join the public hearing virtually from your computer, tablet, or smartphone.

• **Zoom Meeting Link:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87248407731>
• **Meeting ID:** 872 4840 7731
• **Phone Dial In:** 1-301-715-8592

In accordance with Chapter 40A, Section 9 of the Massachusetts General Laws, the Blandford Planning Board is looking to adopt Rules and Regulations governing the organization and conduct of the Planning Board and the governing review and action on Site Plan Review, and Special Permit Applications. These Rules and Regulations

can be accessed on the Town of Blandford website or hard copies may be obtained in the Town Hall.

Hearing will be scheduled on **May 5, 2021** during the Planning Board meeting scheduled to begin at **6:00pm**. Agenda for this meeting includes the regular meeting, a hearing on Belle Fleur Holdings, LLC, and this hearing, which will begin immediately following the Belle Fleur hearing.

Any person interested or wishing to be heard should join the virtual meeting as outlined above or e-mail the chair at: planning@townof-blandford.comm. Please submit comments, in writing, to the Blandford Planning Board at 1 Russell Stage Road, Blandford, MA 01008.

Michael Hutchins,
Chairman
Blandford Planning Board
04/22, 04/29/2021

TOWN OF HUNTINGTON
PUBLIC SHADE TREE
HEARING

Set forth by
M.G.L. Chapter 87, Section 3 Public Shade Tree Hearing **Wednesday, May 5, 2021 at 6:00 p.m.** on the Town Common, 24 Russell Road, Huntington, MA and via Webex (Call: 1-415-655-0001, enter access code: 132 873 8701#, enter password: #)

Regarding removal of thirty-six trees marked with a purple dot on their base on Goss Hill Road between the intersection of Nagler Cross Road and #70 Goss Hill Road for the purpose of road construction.

Walter Wittshirk
Tree Warden
04/15, 04/22/2021

Town of Blandford, MA
Planning Board
NOTICE OF PUBLIC
HEARING

Due to the current pandemic caused by covid-19, there has been a suspension of certain provisions of the open meeting law G.L.C. 30A 18, as well as limitation on the size of gatherings. Please join the public hearing virtually

from your computer, tablet, or smartphone.

• **Zoom Meeting Link:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87248407731>
• **Meeting ID:** 872 4840 7731
• **Phone Dial In:** 1-301-715-8592

Pursuant to MGL, CH40A Sec. 9 the Planning Board will hold a Public Hearing at the Blandford Town Hall, 1 Russell Stage Road, Blandford, MA 01008 **virtually at 6:00pm on May 5, 2021**. This hearing is scheduled under the following Zoning By-Laws of the Town of Blandford: Section IX – Site Plan Review and Special Permits and XV - Adult Use Marijuana Establishments of the Zoning By-Laws of the Town of Blandford to consider the application for a request for a Site Plan Review and Special Permit for the BELLE FLEUR HOLDINGS, LLC, Marijuana Cultivation Project, located at 138 Otis Stage Road, Blandford, MA 01008. The applicants propose to install a marijuana cultivation establishment on 36.5 acres, that is currently zoned as Agricultural and Undeveloped with proposed access from Otis Stage Road. The completed application and plans are available for public inspection using a drop box on the Town of Blandford’s website: townof-blandford.com or https://www.dropbox.com/sh/sy8an1xesznixmh/AACp_GKgKHNNP-zo90DJsAIYa?dl=0 You may also make an appointment to view a hard copy of these forms at the Town Hall by e-mailing the Planning Board Chair at planning@townof-blandford.com. Any person interested or wishing to be heard should join the virtual meeting as outlined above or e-mail the chair at: planning@townof-blandford.com. Please submit comments, in writing, to the Blandford Planning Board at 1 Russell Stage Road, Blandford, MA 01008.

Michael Hutchins,
Chairman
Blandford Planning Board
04/22, 04/29/2021

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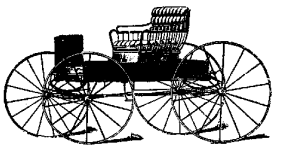
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33 Base Price \$16.00	34 Base Price \$16.50	35 Base Price \$17.00	36 Base Price \$17.50
37 Base Price \$18.00	38 Base Price \$18.50	39 Base Price \$19.00	40 Base Price \$19.50

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HILLTOWNS

WORK AND PLAY



Kim Kelliher, Liz Massa, and Richard Chapman navigate beaver swamp on Tekoa Mountain while working on trail cleanup. The Hilltown Hikers thank all volunteers who help work on local trails.

Submitted photos



Lyle Congdon helped clean part of the trail during the excursion.



Richard Chapman documents the trip up the trail, which runs across Tekoa and Shatterack Mountains in Montgomery and Russell.



The cleanup crew crosses through beaver swamp.



Kim Kelliher and the hikers passed S. Thorpe and H. Bronson Cellar Holes along the trail through Montgomery and Russell.

Send Us Your Summer Event Information

Turley Publications will print your summer calendar listings FREE OF CHARGE in our SUMMERFEST Supplement which publishes early June.

Deadline for submissions is May 4th.

Community Summer Events

Event Should Be Non-Profit & Open to the Public

FREE Calendar Listings Reaching over 200,000 Readers in the Pioneer Valley

Event Name _____

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Location _____

Description _____

Cost _____

Contact name & phone number for more information _____

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